DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 182 SO 009 898

AUTHOR Gardner, John Fentress
TITLE Freedom for Education.
INSTITUTION Council for Educational Freedom in America, Inc., Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Oct 76
NOTE 22p.
AVAILABLE FROM Council for Educational Freedom in America, Inc., 2105 Wintergreen Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20028 ($1.00 paper cover, 10-100 booklets 20% discount)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Freedom; Changing Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; Educational Environment; Educational Improvement; *Educational Philosophy; *Educational Policy; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Essays; Government Role; Higher Education; Individualism; Political Influences; *Private Schools; Productive Thinking; *Public Schools; Socioeconomic Influences; *Values

ABSTRACT

The essay discusses the relationship among schools, the federal government, and American society in an attempt to heighten awareness that positive cultural, political, and economic influences are necessary for educational excellence and world leadership. The essay is presented in two parts. Part I proposes that American national educational policy has favored spiritual neutrality to a degree which has hindered Americans in their search for meaning in life. Recommended to solve this dilemma is transformation of state and federally controlled and supported public schools into self-governing, independent institutions which offer a choice between spiritually grounded and anti-spiritual forms of education. Section II presents consideration of some problems which might arise if Americans were given freedom of choice in matters of education. Problems include: use of independent schools by teachers for bigoted, elitist, or otherwise separatist purposes; segregation of students; power centralization in the hands of teachers; variable standards; and financial problems. Ways of solving all these problems under a system of independent schools are described. (Author/DB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED 177182

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John Gardner
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

FREEDOM FOR EDUCATION

by

John Fentress Gardner

Chairman, The Myrin Institute, Inc.
for Adult Education

SP 009 898

COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM
IN AMERICA, INC.

2105 Wintergreen Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20028

APR 1 8 197

FREEDOM FOR EDUCATION

by
John Fentress Gardner

THE PROPOSAL

How Lift the Fog? 4
All Schools Must Be Free 8

SOME PROBLEMS CONSIDERED

We Used to Imagine 11
But What If . . . ? 14

By the same author:

BOOK:

The Experience of Knowledge: Essays on American Education.
Garden City, New York. Waldorf Press Publishers, Adelphi University, 1975.

ARTICLES:

"Towards a Truly Public Education," *Proceedings* No. 18, 1966
The Myrin Institute, Inc.
521 Park Ave., New York
New York 10021

"Independence for Education," *The Independent School Bulletin,* October 1967, NAIS
4 Liberty Square, Boston, Mass. 02109

"Freedom 1976," Council for Educational Freedom in America, Inc., 2105 Wintergreen Ave., S.E. Washington, D.C. 20028

"Freedom and the Independent School," also published by CEFA.

Copyright © 1976 JOHN F. GARDNER

FREEDOM FOR EDUCATION

The Proposal

America is still the leading nation of the world. Though in wealth and power she stands first among nations, she continues to deserve her long-standing reputation of being also kind, fair and generous. There is no question that by and large she truly wants the best, for others as well as for herself.

And yet we Americans must recognize what is becoming almost a national habit: that too often this best eludes us. We seem incapable of visualizing what this best might be. Limited vision and merely economic ideas of the meaning of life frequently prevent us from imagining how to translate our beautiful motives into correspondingly beautiful results. Our idealistic undertakings tend to turn out badly; we find ourselves increasingly frustrated and confused. All in all, it is not too much to say that we are beginning to lose faith in ourselves privately and as a nation.

That we have almost broken the ties of strength and guidance linking us to the past is a fate we share with all modern nations. But we are also in danger of losing something that is, if anything, still more precious, namely our enthusiasm for the future. Both losses have fatal consequences for our conduct of affairs in the immediate present. They leave us with too little heart to cope. They take the spirit out of us.

What should, among us as presumably free human beings, be the glad pursuit of beauty and truth, the disciplined striving for excellence, the courageous attack upon practical problems, is transforming itself—even while we watch, and against our will —into weak criticism, lazy self-indulgence, and a drugged or mystical retreat from reality.

What should, among citizens presumably voting on their own

welfare as equals, be the establishment of fair mutuality in the laws that govern relationships between human beings (as well as their relationship with nature) too often becomes a bitter contest between pressure groups that forget both humanity and nature in their struggle for power.

What should be the cordial, zestful working together of men and women for the economic benefit of all, tends among us today to become a lackluster routine, in which the objective is to give ever less yet get ever more.

In sum, it is no exaggeration to say that America is fast losing her way in the fog of materialism. Nor can it be doubted that if that fog is not soon dispelled, our leadership, our opportunity and power to do great good among nations, all of which depend upon our firm hold upon the meaning of life, will be taken from us. Even today, simply for the lack of any adequate vision of life's higher possibilities, too many Americans are quarreling with each other, wandering into the by-ways of greed and crime, and squandering strength in pursuit of unworthy pleasures.

How shall our vision be restored? How shall our great but nearly disheartened nation regain the spirit she needs for the tasks that lie before her?

America *must* be inspired anew, her strength refueled. To speak plainly, unless we Americans overcome our present stupefaction, halt our recent slide towards degeneracy, and stop the continuing erosion of our will, we shall soon be so confused and enfeebled that we shall not hold together internally as a nation. Internationally, our waning star of leadership will fall below the horizon. The positive cultural, political and economic influences America should contribute to the modern world are faltering; but if we continue on our present course, they will fail. Other powers, undoubtedly the Eastern, will move in to fill the vacuum.

How Lift the Fog?

Materialism in the brain, sensuality in the appetites, cut us as human beings off from each other; they also break our healing

contact with nature and the inspiration we should be receiving from higher levels of reality. But how shall the heavy fog in which we presently wander be dispelled? Shall the Federal government mandate the teaching in all schools of the new morality as set forth by certain professors? Or shall the Federal government require prayers and Bible reading once again? Shall the churches confederate to stage a revival-to-end-all-revivals? Or is it the psychologists and sociologists—perhaps the technocrats—whom we may expect to lead America into the light?

Clearly, none of these are real possibilities. Western man has arrived at the stage of freedom of conscience and inquiry: none of us would want someone else's way of salvation, even the best, to be imposed upon him.

America will regain vision and vitality only as her individual men and women, her citizens, do. The quest for the meaning of life is theirs alone to undertake. For educators, the question of questions today is this: *Why, during the last century, have the individual men and women of America, using their presumed freedom to seek for their own values, managed to find so few that are worthwhile?* Why, by now, have they no deepened sense of the meaning of life?

The main reason for the bewilderment, dissatisfaction, and failing strength of the individuals who make up our nation is, I submit, that parents and children have *not* been free to seek and to follow their own values. They have been forcibly held away from what they want most, from what they want first and last in life. Something opaque has intervened between the American citizen and the spiritual life towards which he naturally turns. We are just beginning to realize that this opaque something is our national policy in education, which has placed a mighty ban upon spiritual values.

For more than a century now, we have clung to the idea that the almost sacred public school is the cornerstone of democracy. We are just beginning to see that public schools, colleges and universities, insofar as they are agencies of the state, must strive

to be ever more neutral towards—which is to say emptied of—spiritual values. Deepest questions, highest goals, most intimate and precious realities, are not permitted to surface in the state-supported, state-controlled schools that most children and youth attend for many hours daily throughout their formative years.

The time has come for us to admit that so-called public education has by now made its historical contribution; the time is overdue for a fundamentally new arrangement. America will begin to regain her spirit when the new arrangement removes the ban on the only quest human beings really, ultimately, care about: the quest for the essential meaning of life—for bedrock values.

For a time, materialism prospers technical development, but it soon becomes the Slough of Despond for the human soul. Souls in our time long for a new sense of the spiritual in themselves and in the world process. But a spiritual conception of reality must be freely sought; it cannot be inoculated or administered by *fiat*. The natural place for youth to seek insight is at school, through reverence and joy developed in the study of mathematics, literature, the natural sciences, and human history; through the practice and contemplation of art; and through the discussion of real-life problems. But for most young people these moments of inspiration and insight do not take place. In the public schools they attend, since spiritual conceptions of reality are taboo, earthbound conceptions prevail.

This taboo against the spiritual must be lifted, else our future lawyers and doctors, farmers and engineers, ministers and statesmen, artists and teachers, fathers and mothers, will be even more ignorant and despairing of higher values than our present ones.

A school can lift its taboo against teachers offering their best conviction and their deepest insights into the nature of reality only if the school ceases to represent state policy and becomes a place of independent initiative on the part of teachers, choice on the part of students and parents. *The goal for education in America from now on must be to transform, by measures small and great, at a pace rapid rather than slow, the state-controlled*

and -supported public schools into self-governing, independent institutions.

We cannot by any means whatever assure that schools will offer an explicitly spiritual teaching, but we can guarantee the next best thing: namely, that when all schools become independent schools, their teaching will become implicitly far more spirited than it is at present. When the way has been opened for self-governing communities of teachers to address themselves to subject and child without interference from political or economic pressures, a *spirited* education will surely result. Anything less will fail to hold either the continuing attendance of students or the active support of parents and donors.

Fully self-governing, self-determining schools will be far more spirited than what we have today because in them teachers will carry the responsibility for their own teaching. They will be free to give their best, to learn from the acceptance which that best receives, and to improve their teaching whenever and however their own conscience, as it wrestles with experience, suggests. Fully self-governing, self-determining schools will be spirited in that students will become, for the teachers, the single focus of attention. The students in their turn will be deeply stirred by the living example, as well as by the educational message, of those who speak to them with authority—who are, that is, the actual authors or prime movers with respect to their own teaching. Each self-governing, self-determining school will be free to evolve its unique character, to stand for the values it deems vital, and thus to attract enthusiastic supporters. Vague, dispirited or unspirited schools will hold neither student body nor patrons.

A spirited teaching, even if it starts from materialism, tends to grow in spirituality; for as Emerson said, "the spirit hath life in itself." That life evolves.

But is there nevertheless a danger that in free combat a false spirit will drive good spirits from the field? This danger exists of course, for where freedom of choice exists, results can never be guaranteed. At times, bad money does seem to drive out good.

Yet America is founded upon the assumption that when people are given freedom to choose, the choices they make will in the long run tend towards what is intelligent and sound. Can the danger that *some* parents may be seduced for a time by the false glamor of an unworthy school be compared with the danger that now exists for practically *all* American families: the danger that comes from not having *any* choice for their children — from being offered, in fact, only the single possibility: the spiritless one?

In a free culture, citizens would at least have an equal choice between spiritually grounded and anti-spiritual forms of education. Perhaps partly because we have been afraid of the latter, we have — so far as public education is concerned — suppressed the former. So in most *un*free fashion and with predictably disastrous results, we have demanded universal support for an *un*spiritual form of education that comes between human souls and the nourishment they must have. Homogenized, neutralized, and emasculated in basic ways — ever-increasingly empty of nourishment for the souls of children — such an education sees itself being gradually transformed into an agency that is without power either to inspire or to discipline. As far as spiritual values are concerned, the state school system proves to be a dog in the manger.

All Schools Must Be Free

Today we have public schools and independent or parochial schools. The latter, despite the crippling economic handicaps with which they are saddled, enjoy a limited measure of freedom that they are anxious to preserve. And yet so little do they appreciate the privilege they enjoy that it never occurs to them to want to extend it to all schools. It is typical of the majority of independent school teachers that they quickly genuflect, even without being challenged, before the idea of state-controlled education for most people — "for the great majority," as they say. For their special clientele they claim a privilege in no way en-

visioned for the ge..erality. Instead of seeing themselves as forerunners of the new, they are willing to be thought of as precious relics from olden times. They ask only to be permitted *also* to exist.

Independent institutions which have never thought of extending the principle of independence to all schools and colleges, at all levels, are now hoping nevertheless that all citizens will vote voucher or tax credit provisions that will channel state monies to them! Thus the independent schools have a quite unimaginative, even ungenerous concept of the role of freedom in education; and yet they hope that the public school citizenry will be statesmanlike in giving them public support without strings. Too few realize that they are wanting something that will never be; for either they will not get the vouchers at all, or they will get them with such stipulations attached that they will in fact be selling their freedom for a mess of pottage. The voucher lure will serve only to draw the remaining free mustangs from the open range into the open corral. Once they are in, the gate will be dropped and the wildlings summarily thrown, branded, and broken to the bits and saddles of the whole hierarchy of state riders.

Two hundred years ago it was realized that it would be folly to try to solve the church-state problem by establishing the most equitable and least obnoxious state-controlled church. When the question was thought through, it was seen that the ideal relationship would be for the state to allow religion to go its own way: to develop and rely upon its *own* community-building power. This separation of church from state was deemed absolutely necessary, despite the fear of many that a great number of people, particularly the uneducated poor, did not have the capacity to make sound, wholesome decisions about religion.

With great intuitive wisdom, the Founding Fathers recognized that lasting social harmony could be built only on the bedrock of religious, moral, intellectual freedom. That this same insight was not applied for the same reasons specifically to education

must be attributed to the conditions of that period. Since at that time there were no state-run schools, no special law of separation seemed called for. Schools were already and automatically independent of state control because the affiliation of most was with the church.

The Founding Fathers took for granted the importance of spiritual values in the education of the young. Doubtless they assumed that the wall they had set between religion and government power would also protect education from state control.

The wall that must now be raised between state and school, for all schools, is the same as that raised long ago between state and church, for all churches. And it must be raised for the same reasons, which apply also and equally to the arts and to the sciences. Science, art, religion, personal morality — the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good on the basis of commitment to a freely chosen philosophy of life — when taken together, are nothing less than the substance of education. The necessity for freedom of inquiry, freedom of conscience, freedom to experience one's very own initiative and ability, freedom to be creative, amounts to an equal necessity for all kinds of education, at all levels, to be essentially, distinctively free.*

---

* "Given the principle of government neutrality, applying the right of educational choice in non-religious contexts makes fundamental sense. . . . The history of religious liberty and persecution prior to the writing of the First Amendment pointed clearly to religion as a prime source of these basic values and to religious intolerance as a prime source of factionalized governments and oppression. This view must be translated for a modern America in which religion is no longer so basic. The great issues of conscience and belief are no longer fought under religious banners. . . .

"Because it protects against involuntary government intrusions upon individual consciousness, the First Amendment may require changing the economic and political structure of compulsory schooling to separate school and state, just as the First Amendment requires separation of church and state." — Stephen Arons, "The Separation of School and State: *Pierce* Reconsidered," *Harvard Educational Review*, February 1976.

Some Problems Considered

We Used to Imagine

☙ In the past, many Americans imagined that the compulsory common school was needed as a melting pot to assimilate the unwieldy number of immigrants. This concept was challenged by other Americans even then, but under present conditions it is certainly a mistake. What the America of big business and big government, of mass production and the mass media, of uniformity and conformism, needs now is to establish the countervailing principle of individuation. Against uniformity we must set independence; against the lump, the leaven. The leaven of free creativeness according to conscience and ability must begin where all cultural and spiritual, and indeed all practical, development takes shape: namely, in the schools.

☙ In the rural past, many Americans imagined that the common public school would foster simple humanity by mixing children of all backgrounds together. Now that the nation is largely urbanized and suburbanized, any sociologist can demonstrate that the different socio-economic strata, the races and religions, too, are grouped in clearly defined geographical districts. A given narrow grouping lives in a specific area, and it is just this area that supports a public school! What America needs now is a concept of educational opportunity that will permit children to cross these lines of separation, but in a free way. It is too seldom realized that this cross-sectioning *would* take place freely, were all schools made schools of choice. A school that puts academic excellence first among its goals will tend to attract and accept students of all categories, creeds and colors, so long as they show the possibility of advancing academically. Other schools that feature physical fitness or character training will also attract a complete cross-section of children, with the single proviso that they all care primarily for physical fitness or for character. The same mixing occurs presently in the religiously oriented schools.

12

As for those who are called the elite — the well-born and well-to-do — perhaps there are comparatively few among them who would actually place snobbery above the more objective kinds of excellence that schools can offer.

☙ In the recent past, many Americans imagined that knowledge and skills can be taught scientifically in a common school, apart from moral and spiritual values. These latter, as matters of faith, were to be imparted at church or in the home. But in our day the school, not the church, is foremost in the forming of character and culture; and parents in the home often have only that to offer which they have gained, or failed to gain, a little earlier from their own school experience. In any case, as every school of education realizes full well, it is both offensive and ineffectual to ask that children pass the long school day without being offered moral and spiritual content as an intrinsic part of their studies. No curriculum worthy of the name can be taught outside the context of higher and deeper meanings.

☙ In the past, many Americans imagined that the common public school was a good idea so long as it remained subject to local control. The thought was to give parents a warm personal interest and close human relationship with respect to the education of their children: a chance to exercise supervision and even to make their own contribution to this education. But with the passage of time, local schools have been consolidated; the state's control has been brought in along with its money; and the Federal government is being invited to play an ever greater role. "Local control" is a thing of the past. In any event, we should by now be clear that whether the control of policy lies with the U.S. Office of Education, the State Department of Education, or the elected local school board, that control is governmental. The only meaning that local control should have in the future is the one it should have had all along: namely, that the locus of control be entirely in the hands of the teaching staff

of each individual school. How students, parents, representatives from the larger community, experts from all walks of life, will be drawn into the educational process should depend solely upon the discretion of this particular teaching staff.

Of course, the basic control a parent exercises upon every such independent school is in its own way also an absolute. The parent's authority is equal and opposite to that of the teacher: it lies in his ability to give or to withhold patronage, at *his* sole discretion.

In the past, many Americans feared that giving parents full freedom to choose among schools would allow racial and religious bigotry to divide the country against itself. The compulsory common school was to provide at least the habit of social cohesion. But after more than a hundred years of common schooling, millions of citizens are finding slackness, skepticism, indifference and vacuity a more real and present danger than any threat of possible bigotry.

It is to be noted that as a cure for racial prejudice in particular, compulsory integration is proving as unacceptable as compulsory segregation. We should be ready, at last, to try freedom of choice.

Two factors, after all, are strongest in holding society together, and neither prospers in the compulsory common school. Both factors begin to flourish when initiative and free choice enter the picture. The first factor is indicated by saying that when men are given creative freedom, academic freedom, freedom of inquiry, freedom of conscience, and freedom to associate for freely chosen common purposes, they feel encouraged to draw from what is deepest in themselves. And what lies deepest in every human being is the universal power of reason. When individual men think in complete freedom, but energetically, about fundamental questions, they draw more closely together, because "The mind is one."

The second factor making for social cohesion is the *gratitude* free individuals feel towards their society when it gives them

leave to pursue moral, cultural, artistic, religious values — that is, educational values — in their own unhindered, individual way.

To be remembered, too, is the fact that as surely as a handful of teachers might be tempted to use an independent school for a bigoted, elitist, or otherwise separatist purpose, just so surely will another group before long be moved to establish nearby a school that specializes in the integrating impulse. In such a case, state power need intervene only to protect the right of parents in a community to choose freely between the two schools.

But What If . . . ?

Questions arise, such as *"If the state steps out of education, what will happen to standards?"* In answering this particular worry, let us remind ourselves that when externally imposed restrictions and regulations, codes and red tape, turn schools into so many welfare departments, post offices and motor vehicle bureaus, many of the nation's most capable young personalities are turned away from the whole enterprise of teaching.

By governmental intervention we have not improved teaching; we have made it more teacher-proof. We have sought to lift professional competence by state certification requirements, state curriculum guides, state supervision and examination, at the same time that we were trying to guarantee good teaching would get done *in spite of* the teachers: through the proliferation of textbooks (with a manual on the use of each one), televised lessons of master teachers, and now the new teaching programs, kits and modules. Obviously, the main practical effect of most of these persistent efforts has been to make individuals of really great potentiality for teaching feel uninvited and even disinvited. The further we go in this direction, skeptically by-passing the actual teacher as author of his own teaching and removing policy from his hands to that of distant experts and officials, the further we degrade him below the artist, doctor, engineer and lawyer, and the sooner we find him leaving the so-called profession of teaching

for a job that permits real initiative and the sense of responsibility that goes with it.

Our better strategy in the future must be to build upon trust rather than distrust of the teacher. No amount of state-mandated teacher-training, or board-mandated supervision, or union-guaranteed security and high wages will ever compare with a strategy of creative, responsible freedom that is able to attract and hold superior ability in the first place.

Be it noted, too, that teachers and schools do not need the state to evaluate them or hold them to standards. The first thing schools would do, were they entirely free of external pressures, would be to start conferring: establishing criteria of excellence, working out common methods of transfer and exchange, passing out Good Housekeeping labels, and the like. At first they would, indeed, have to fight hard against the statist habits of thought they had meant to abandon but that still clung to them.

❧ Of course, the main question that we Americans tend to raise about any new proposition is: *"How will it be paid for? How would we raise the money?"* In respect of money, we have three problems: fixing the amount needed, acquiring that amount, and seeing that it is efficiently used.

As to the amount needed to support a number of independent schools adequate to educate all the nation's children, surely it will not be greater than the total that now maintains the combined public, parochial and independent institutions. Experience in many communities shows that education in good independent and parochial schools costs less per child than it does in the local public school; and it stands to reason that when a teaching staff carries responsibilty for finances as well as for educational policy in its own school, it will be both innovative and saving. Free enterprise need never fear comparison on the grounds of efficiency with state-managed enterprise. So the total sum needed to educate the same number of children in a new way will be no more; and the nation is sure to get more for what it pays than it does now.

16

In raising money for education, when all schools become autonomous, we should have the same choice of methods as at present; but the relative importance of these methods should as soon as possible be reversed. Money for education is now raised primarily by taxes, secondarily by tuition fees, and thirdly by gifts. This is not the place to examine carefully the merits of each. It is logical, however, that freely offered and freely chosen schools should eventually be freely supported. Paying for education is not really a *quid pro quo* affair. The substance of education is, as we have said, none other than the substance of religion, science, and art. This is spiritual substance, and it follows laws quite different in some respects from those of manufacture and commerce. Spiritual substance is received by the active teacher as a matter of grace; he cannot buy it and he should not be paid for it. That substance should be offered as it was received: freely. The families whose children receive it should make their own free offering in return. The only right response to grace is gratitude; and when schools are free to offer their best, there will be much more than now about which students and their parents may be grateful. When education has shown its power to inspire children, to quicken them morally and stimulate really creative powers for practical life, more money will willingly flow to education than has ever been extracted by taxes.

Gifts to education — i.e., directly to particular schools, or indirectly via independent foundations whose task is to provide needy schools with capital and help them with operating expenses — should continue to be tax-exempt. It would be far better for the state simply to require evidence of such gifts than itself to collect the corresponding taxes. Every encouragement should be accorded to *giving,* in recognition that this use of money is the right one for cultural and spiritual — above all for educational — undertakings. *We should look forward to a time when we shall consider it natural as well as necessary that a major portion of the national income is paid out as gifts.*

To think in terms of tuition fees should be seen as an inap-

propriate mental habit borrowed from the market place. Very few schools, and those not the best schools, depend upon tuition to cover their expenses. Nearly all look to supplementary annual giving. It is a sound instinct that leads these schools, in turn, to give away their education, in the form of tuition grants, to as many as possible. Even as all who seek religious help should be free to enter a church, where the widow's mites count for as much as the rich man's legacy, so should every child's right to education be measured by his ability, desire and will, not by his parent's pocketbook. We can expect that as the duty and habit of giving are encouraged to displace both taxes and *quid pro quo* marketplace transactions, tuition fees should also disappear.

The state, of course, retains its taxing power, which it can use to stimulate initiative and with which it can cover shortfall emergencies during the transition period required for the Principle of Giving to establish itself.

☙ *What about vouchers?* One can imagine vouchers being used transitionally to encourage initiative on the part of teachers and parents in the founding of more independent schools, especially in urban ghettos and other areas where public education has proved itself helpless. Vouchers, if full-fledged and given with very few strings, could stabilize the existing independent institutions, many of which are being extinguished and all of which are threatened by the unfair competition of schools that are state-supported. Yet it should be recognized that vouchers are more likely in the end to curtail existing freedom than they are to open up new freedom. Vouchers are probably not the long-term answer. In the first place, it is inevitable — and in many ways even right — that the piper-payer *will* call the tune; and so state vouchers must be expected to extend rather than limit the state's control of education. This fatality could be avoided only if the citizenry were to become *so* enlightened as to insist upon the state's using vouchers only in ways that safeguard maximum freedom. But it seems reasonable to observe that if the voting public

were as enlightened as that, it would not look to vouchers in the first place as the preferred method of supporting education. Anyone who really wants freedom, because he knows its incomparable power to bring forth intelligence and motivation, practicality and discipline, peace and satisfaction, in human life, will want to go beyond vouchers to free gifts. In his judgment, the voluntary principle will be most likely to produce in the best way the most money for education.

There is another weakness in the voucher arrangement. Even were the state, unimaginably, not to follow so-called public money with public control, schools that became accustomed to receiving such money according to some impersonal, technical formula, would soon become almost as unaccountable as the present public schools. They would cease to demand the most of themselves, cease to make the best contact with their students. According to any conceivable state formula, one student of a given category would bring in voucher money the same as another, and almost automatically. In consequence, the all-important sense of enterprise and responsibility, the creative atmosphere of giving gifts under grace and receiving gifts by grace, would be dissipated or deadened. One would be playing a very different, a less productive and less responsible, game.

Were education to become a business, what would happen to students who could not pay the price asked for the product? And how would a faculty of teachers prevent itself from being caught up in the same competitive race that presently rules business?

It would be a great mistake to jump from the frying pan into the fire: that is, to abandon state concepts of the support and control of education for those of the market place as we know it. Imagine the advertising claims, always verging on fraud! Imagine the drive to gain by shrewd bargaining, by mass-production, by giving just a little less for the same price. No, the financing of education should follow neither the statist nor the

market pattern. Along with other aspects of cultural-spiritual life, it should follow the law of its *own* kind, which is *reciprocal giving.*

There are many today who are so acccustomed to thinking of the state as the only protector of human beings who are weak by reason of minority status, lack of money, or lack of ability, that they have difficulty imagining what would happen to these kinds of people, were public education to be disestablished. Such folk press this question: *Were schools free to choose their students as well as be chosen by them, who would choose the indigent, the ignorant, the handicapped, the criminally inclined?* The answer, based not on theory but on life-experience, is that for every kind of pupil there is a potential teacher, a teacher who would very much like to deal with just his problem. In many cases, the very teachers who would have to reject or expel certain pupils from their present school — because no school can be all things to all people — would not be averse, were it necessary, to setting up alongside the first school a new one that could offer those rejected just the intensive, new approach they require.

As for the probable *support* of schools for unfavored cases, once such schools have been freely founded by the responsible initiative of teachers who choose to do the job, does not life-experience suggest once again that these projects will find special favor in many eyes? What can arouse greater enthusiasm in the philanthropic heart — and every heart is philanthropic within its own means — than to see much being made of little, bad being replaced by good, and hope kindled out of despair?

October 1976

THE COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM IN AMERICA, INC. believes the time has come for intensive study and broad discussion of what the relationship *should be* between schools, all schools, and the society of which they are a part.

THE COUNCIL is a non-profit, tax-deductible corporation chartered under the laws of the State of New York and supported by voluntary contributions. Your participation or gift will be welcomed.

Further information and literature may be obtained by writing:

Robert S. Marlowe, *President*
The Council for Educational Freedom
in America, Inc.
2105 Wintergreen Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20028